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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000224

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AJ](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI AMBASSADOR REVIEWS PRESIDENT ALIYEV'S
RECENT COMMENTS ABOUT IRAN

REF: A. 06 BAKU 01684

[1](#)B. 06 BAKU 01835

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Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Israeli Ambassador Arthur Lenk met with the Ambassador on February 16 to discuss President Aliyev's recent comments on Iran to the Israeli Foreign Minister during the January 24-28 World Economic Forum. Aliyev reportedly characterized Iran as a "cornered, wild animal" that is "not going to back down" in the face of international sanctions. Aliyev suggested that there needs to be further engagement with Iran. Aliyev also reportedly suggested that after the US leaves Iraq, there will be a corresponding declining US interest in Azerbaijan. On the bilateral Israeli-Azerbaijani relationship, Lenk commented that while the GOAJ is "enthusiastic" about closer ties, "almost nothing happens unless we push" the GOAJ. End Summary.

Aliyev Refers to Iran as a "Cornered, Wild Animal"

[1](#)2. (C) Lenk provided the Ambassador with a readout on Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Tzipi Livni's meeting with President Aliyev during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. According to Lenk, Livni and Aliyev's meeting primarily focused on Iran, with Aliyev doing most of the talking. Lenk noted that Livni and Aliyev spent only a limited amount of time addressing "bilateral issues" and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

[1](#)3. (C) Aliyev reportedly said Iran is a "significant problem" and is like a "cornered, wild animal," while suggesting that there is no effective international mechanism to counter the threat posed by Iran. Iran is "not going to back down" because of international sanctions, according to Aliyev. Aliyev also reportedly said that US pressure against Iran will not work. Tracking with Aliyev's public message, Aliyev reportedly suggested that there needs to be further engagement with Iran. Aliyev also reportedly suggested that after the US leaves Iraq, there will be a corresponding declining US interest in Azerbaijan. Finally, Aliyev remarked that the outcome of almost any scenario -- concerning the US or the UN's policy toward Iran -- for Azerbaijan is likely to be bad. Aliyev also noted that Azerbaijan feels "under pressure" by Iran because of Azerbaijan's good relations with the US and Israel.

Commentary about the Bilateral Relationship

14. (C) Lenk commented that historically Israel's relations with Azerbaijan have "ebbed and flowed." Azerbaijan is, however, "enthusiastic" about pursuing closer relations with Israel. The GOAJ's general hesitancy to sign agreements with Israel and the lack of an Azerbaijani embassy in Israel complicates matters, according to Lenk. Lenk also observed that "almost nothing happens (in the bilateral relationship) unless we push" the GOAJ. Lenk remarked that Azerbaijan sees good relations with Israel as a window for closer relations with the US. Azerbaijan also probably looks to Israel as a model for understanding how a small country surrounded by enemies can defend itself, according to Lenk.

Bilateral Visits

15. (C) Lenk told the Ambassador that Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh will visit Azerbaijan for two days of meetings in late February. The purpose of the visit is to discuss Iran, according to Lenk, and in a sign that the GOAJ attaches importance to the visit, President Aliyev has already tentatively scheduled a meeting with Sneh. (Note: Meetings with President Aliyev typically are not confirmed until several hours beforehand. End Note.)

16. (C) Lenk said Vahid Aliyev, President Aliyev's aide on security issues, was currently in Israel for medical reasons. Vahid Aliyev's trip involves two days of meetings, including meetings with Sneh and the Mossad. In addition, Lenk noted that Azerbaijani Economic Development Minister Heydar Babayev will begin a visit to Israel on February 25. Lenk said the highlight of the visit will be the signing of a bilateral trade and investment agreement, which will be the first bilateral economic agreement between Azerbaijan and Israel.

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In response to the Ambassador's question on other bilateral agreements, Lenk commented that there are two existing bilateral security agreements, which are not public.

17. (C) Azerbaijani Minister of Defense Industry Yavar Jamalov will visit Israel in late April or early May, according to Lenk. (Comment: While the purpose of the visit remains unclear, Jamalov's ministry was created in December 2005 and Jamalov has been busy visiting a number of countries in connection with purchases to bolster Azerbaijan's defense sector and refurbish its decayed defense industry. -- reftel A).

Russia

18. (C) Turning briefly to Israel's relations with Russia, Lenk said Israel "needs to work with Russia" at some level. Lenk observed that while he had read Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Mammadyarov's Wall Street Journal editorial -- titled "Protect Us From Bullies" -- Russian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Vasiliy Istratov told him that he had not even reported it to Moscow, as people inside the Kremlin do not read the Wall Street Journal and if they did read the op-ed, it would only cause trouble.

Comment

19. (C) Aliyev's comments about Iran are consistent with the message he delivers to us (reftel B). The GOAJ continues to perceive little advantage in supporting US or UN policies that Iran perceives as threatening. We believe that A/S Rodman's recent visit has opened the door to addressing these concerns.

DERSE